

Historicising Insurgencies in Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper historically explores the persistent insurgencies in Nigeria since independence. The exploration becomes imperative when consideration is given to the fact the country passed through thirty months ethnically contrived civil war between 1967 and 1970 yet its survival still remains threatened by divisive tendencies from its various ethnic groups that constantly pose obstacles to any project of national integration and unity¹. As a way of conclusion, the paper rejects the response of the federal government branding these insurgencies as criminality or terrorism that could be dealt with by overpopulating the affected region with armed security forces on the one hand, and peace-buying paternalistic amnesty handouts² on the other. It rather argues for the engagement with the underlying issues of integration and poverty as viable and sustainable pathway for the restoration of social order in the country. Unless the ruling elite engage with these underlying issues, Nigeria will not only be subjected to internal crisis of increasing proportions but also perpetual policy and developmental somersaults.

Introduction

Societal complexity no doubt brings us to the question of social control or governance especially in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria. Though governance is not a new phenomenon in human history, it is the underbelly of the society cohesion since time immemorial. Nigeria is increasingly deficient to face the challenges of the burgeoning complexity of its multi-ethnic nature. Not only have the various post-colonial governments failed to integrate the multi-ethnic groups together towards nation-building but each failure leaves the disintegration in a worse situation.

Every regime is accompanied by new ethnic militia whose angst always include injustice in resource control, power centralisation, relative deprivation in political and economic opportunities, poor governance, etc; The current 'crisis of governance' represents a manifestation of loss of control by the Nigeria's post-colonial state and the kind of leadership it throws up.

¹Mustapha, Abdul Raufu (2006) "Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector in Nigeria, Democracy". In: Governance, and Human Rights Programme Paper Number 24, November, 2006. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

² See Olateju, O A (2011), *Nigeria's faltering Federalism: The bane of post-amnesty sustainable development in the Niger Delta*. 2011. TTI/CPED workshop book of Reading Benin City Edo state, Nigeria.

A country endowed with mineral and human resources capable of ensuring development remains ridden with crisis of governance. Democracy in Nigeria faces stiff test. Politics is deeply flawed and contributes to rising violence. Post independent elections are volatile exercises leading to loss of lives and properties. Every election is preceded by threats from each geo-political region insisting on their right to occupy the leadership position. The country is witnessing violent ethnic and religious clashes. Government is yet to unravel the justification for the violence talk-less of curbing the perennial life-snuffing attacks.

Fingers are pointed at the political elite for playing on and exacerbating inter-communal clashes in their jostling for leadership control. Political elite also through the government swiftly react by branding many of the symptoms, especially the rise of militancy, as simple criminality to be dealt with by more police and more troops. This is yet to address challenges posed by the questionable integration of the ethnic groups that has been identified by some observers as the principal cause of violence. Question of whether the country can remain as one political entity still begs for an answer in political discourses.

For example in March 2005, an independent panel of experts on Sub-Saharan Africa convened by the U.S. government's National Intelligence Council predicted the "outright collapse of Nigeria" within the next fifteen years³. Nigeria's government promptly rejected the report and labelled its authors as "prophets of doom"⁴. Current realities ranging from perennial communal clashes in the middle-belt region, MOSOP, MEND, OPC, MASSOB to BOKO - HARAM are proving the prediction to be a "real scenario"⁵. Insurgencies in Nigeria are, in this paper, hinged on two different but connected forces.

These are historical legacies of colonialism that ushered in unbridled economic exploitation that sapped sub-Saharan cultures of their vitality⁶ and the post-colonial leadership associated with poor economic performance, whose effects are glaring on the living conditions of the generality of the people⁷. Ethnic cleavages that characterise the post-colonial Nigerian state are, as identified by Katsina, 'legacies of colonial policies of divide and rule', that promote less inclusive socio-political institutions and individualistic liberal values that "entrench ethnic divisions and hamper genuine national integration"⁸. These are considered as parts of underlying factors that threaten Nigeria's political stability.

The consideration is buoyed with an argument that the inability of the post-colonial Nigerian state to sustain the pre-colonial values of communality, reciprocity and fraternity which made pre-colonial people self sufficient in the generation and distribution of the basic necessities of life contributed to the sustenance of poverty that fuels people's resistance to post-colonial exclusive politics and developmental policies.

³National Intelligence Council (2005) "Mapping Sub-Saharan Africa's Future"

⁴Aziken, E (2005) "Obasanjo denounces US intelligence reports", The Vanguard, 25 May

⁵ International Crisis Group (2006) Nigeria's Faulty Federal Experiment, Africa Report, No. 119, p1-3. Abuja, 18 April

⁶Abraham, E W (1992) 'Prologue: Crisis in African Cultures'. In: Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, eds., *Person and Community*, Washington: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy p.27

⁷Fagbadebo, O (2007) Corruption, Governance and Political Instability in Nigeria, *Journal of Political Science and International Relations* Vol. 1 (2), pp.028-037

⁸Katsina, A M (2012) "Colonialism, post-colonialism and ethnic cleavages in Africa: Nigeria since independence". In: Conference proceedings of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma Katsina state, Nigeria. June 2012 p.2

The frontier of this argument is extended to capture lack of genuine power sharing between the centre and the federating states as lubricants for the insurgencies and as a promoter of no-holds-barred conflict between the regions of the federating states and the federal government for power devolution and autonomy over the resources within their domains. The paper commences by fixing Nigeria's predicament in a theoretical perspective, followed by historical analysis of Nigeria's faltering federalism and the issue of national question. Capitalism and the growth of nationalism is analysed after the national question while the conclusion follows.

Nigeria's situation in a theoretical context

Theoretically, insurgencies in Nigeria need to be situated within a pluralistic theoretical framework of ethnic identity and class analysis for a clearer appreciation of its genesis. This framework enables the illumination of our analysis with the search-light of national question determinism⁹ National question determinism is considered to be broader than economic determinism that the US government emphasises as the singular driving force of the Boko Haram insurgence in impoverished Northern Nigeria. The US argument only concentrates our attention on economic relationship to explain the social processes that shape society and history.

However national question determinism provides us with the historical explanatory tool for the interplay of social forces that combine with economic relationship to propel the national question and socio-economic processes that shape society and history in the context of political, cultural and environmental processes. This approach becomes compelling for our analysis being principally about the people and their historical, social and cultural relationships. The pluralistic theoretical explanation becomes more compelling for the analysis of the genesis of insurgencies in Nigeria because of the character and nature of the insurgencies that have the colouration of historical struggles, ethnic identity, economic deprivation and demand for some degrees of autonomy for the federating states within the Nigerian illiberal federal structure.

The root of any social situation or conflict does not necessarily lie only, as identified by Marx and Engels in the economic relationship but when such relationship combines with other social forces such as unequal treatment of federating units in a federation, tyrannical suppression of the people and opposition or religious intolerance. This is why the US argument requires an expansion. At the beginning of the 21st century, changes in global economies, geopolitics and industry that occasioned new patterns of development and production also affects the volume and flows of natural resources from Nigeria like any other resource country.

Nigeria being a primary resource-country becomes vulnerable to these changes in view of the volumes of global demand for its extractive mineral resources. The demand significantly increases foreign investments in Nigeria and improves its GNI without significance economic growth and positive impact on the local livelihoods.

⁹Olateju, O (2011) Nigeria's faltering Federalism: The Bane of Post-Amnesty Sustainable Development and Peace in the Niger Delta. In "Confronting the Challenges of Development, Environmental Management and Peace Building in The Niger Delta: Beyond Amnesty" TTI and CPED 2011 workshop proceedings, pp.88-100 (88).

This partly arises from the Nigerian illiberal federalism where the centre holds the entire resources in trust for the hosting federating state under the guise of ‘for the benefit of the whole’; and also partly as a consequence of the unequal exchange of commodities in the context of mineral extraction and export between the ‘Resource exporters and Resource Importers’¹⁰. It therefore becomes vital to interrogate the unequal economic relationship between the exporters and importers of resources. This interrogation will reveal the impacts of the intensive mineral exploration and exploitation on the democratic majority of the people. It will also reveal the correlation between poverty and the intensive resource extraction to any scholar interested in Nigeria’s political economic insurgencies.

Following Hyden¹¹, we need to appreciate that development implies integration of individual livelihood into the globalised economy where peoples’ destinies irrespective of geographical space will be globalised. Resource flows stand at the epicentre of this integration. Its control and its manner of conception, management and sustenance are vital in our understanding of its linkage with Nigeria’s domestic insurgencies. This view drives home the poor economic performance raised by the US. Nigeria government cannot continue claiming ignorance of the proportional relationship between Nigerian livelihoods and the global economy structures and processes.

Resource flows from Nigeria are yet to reflect in the standards of living of the people. The globalised economy remains a potential threat to the welfare of the people, therefore rather than condemning the insurgence as fundamentalist violence, perhaps it will serve the state better if the insurgence could be treated as a new form of consciousness emerging from the effects of the globalised resource flows combined with poor economic performance and illiberal federalism at home.

Nigeria’s federalism and her national question

The argument that the current political crisis in Nigeria is a reflection of the faulty amalgamation in 1900 by the colonial administration which laid the foundation for the faltering federalism could hardly be ignored in any political discourse of Nigeria’s political crisis. Federalism as a political arrangement is seen to be the ideal form of government in ethnically diverse countries in the hope that it will foster greater political participation and reduce inequality among diverse populations. In case of Nigeria with her over 250 ethnic groups inherited this legacy of federalism from the British colonial rulers without the consent of the concerned groups.

Federalism can only survive by the consensus agreement of the nations involved and not by imposed constitutionalism which Noah Feldman sees as nothing new in the decolonisation process and the post-colonial nation-building by the imperial powers¹². Choudhry advances this view with an argument that

...many imperial powers drafted the post-independence constitutions of colonies as part of the process of decolonisation. A foreign power would design the institutional and legal architecture of another political community without its consent. The constitution was presented as a *fait accompli*.

¹⁰Ross, M (1999) The Political Economy of The Resource Curse. World Politics (January, 1999) pp.297-322 (302)

¹¹ Hyden *African Studies Quarterly* | Volume 1, Issue 1 | 1997

¹² Feldman, N (2004) *What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2004).

Local participation—there was usually some—did not entail meaningful, substantive decision-making power.

Rather, it was directed at ensuring the acquiescence of local elites, with fundamental questions of constitutional choice safely remaining in foreign hands¹³.

The process of Nigeria's illiberal federalism that serves as foundation for the post-colonial state building followed this path of imposed constitutionalism. The greatest happenstance of process is the constant threat it poses to the post-colonial Nigerian state because there remains a continuous challenge to the amalgamation of two protectorates by deep and irreconcilable tension between the imposition of a constitutional order and the desires of the people to be autonomous territories.

The spirit of self-determination which Choudhry stresses as;

...encompasses more than merely the right of a political community to exercise power within an extant constitutional-legal order with democratic features. Rather, that right extends down to the very structure within which a community exercises its power of self-government, encompassing the most basic questions of institutional design. This is what is meant by the phrase that the right to self-government is the right of rights¹⁴

One basic issue Choudhry draws into the discourse in relation to the Nigeria's brand of federalism is the issue of national question. This illiberal federal system instigates two prominent questions that require clarification. These are what a nation is and how does national question develop? Spelling out these two questions, illuminates the manifestation and origin of national question in Nigeria, which has remained at the root of her political instability.

The idea of defining a nation as essentially a group of people who had decided to live together is based on the much cherished values of all liberals, which is human life is essentially about individual choice. It assumes that human societies are comparable to private companies and based on contract, when instead they are in fact comparable to families and based on the principles of blood relationship and paternity. That is a something which no amount of political sophistry can hide. This idea though appears to have taken the notion of multiculturalism into consideration but the absence of the inherited values of the people renders the argument a weak view of a nation. These values are inherited and of which individuals have no control over.

The idea of treating a nation simplistically as people of various cultural backgrounds coming together on the basis of simple choices while preserving the various elements of their cultural backgrounds appears weak. It is weak in the sense that choices and forms of human behaviours as argued by Laughland¹⁵ are partly determined by ethnicity – very often without people being aware of it. Those choices made by individuals are somehow being influenced by factors such as parenthood, nationhood and ethnicity, which are beyond our personal control.

¹³Choudhry, S. (2005) 'Old imperial dilemmas and the new nation-building: Constitutive constitutional politics in multinational polities', *Connecticut Law Review*, 377 (2005), p.933

¹⁴Op cit 11

¹⁵Laughland John (2008) *What Is a Nation?* The Brussels journal, Zurich, Switzerland: Society for the Advancement of Freedom in Europe (SAFE). 2008-07-08

They all form part of our social beings and without them we remain biological beings. This basic fact reveals to us that whatever choices the individuals themselves may make, we are being influenced by our social make-ups. This is a fundamental pillar of communitarians' argument against liberalism.

Looking into Nigeria's historical make-ups will reveal that in the north, there was the Fulani Empire made up of large emirates with developed feudal government machinery that stretched to Ofa in the Southern part of Nigeria. At the time of the arrival of the British, the Fulani Empire was already disintegrating due to intra-ethnic rivalry. This period also witnessed the disintegration of the once powerful Yoruba Empires that were centered on Ile-Ife and Oyo and extending to Benin in the present Edo state, Lagos in the South, Ilorin and Kaba in the North. The Yoruba inter-tribal wars of the 19th century between Oyo and Ibadan, Ijebu and Egba, Egba and Ebado ethnic groupings etc left the Yoruba Empires in utter disunity and made them vulnerable to conquest by the British.

In the East, apart from the Onitsha, Opobo, and Calabar dynasties, feudalism was still at its infancy. The general picture was one of primitive communal, semi-slave society which was breaking up to yield place to the feudal system. From the above historical data, it is obvious that the nations were yet to mature in Nigeria before the advent of the British. At best, we can refer to Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Benin or Knauri nationalities. Most of other groups were still at tribal levels unlike the development that took place in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries resulting in the breakdown of old feudal empires and the rise of nation-states under the impact of capitalism.

The semi-primitive communal, semi-slave and semi-feudal cultures of the pre-colonial societies fell under the heavy influence of capitalism. The road to the formation of nation-states was therefore halted and its place was the colonial experiment of arbitrarily forcing the people together to form a multinational state now known as Nigeria. Nigeria became an administrative division or a "neo-trading post"¹⁶ of British neo-colonial interests in Africa serving the same purpose like its "trading post" progenitor. Much of the subdivisions in form of constitutions were to enhance effective administration for the colonial exploitation rather than help the nations and the nationalities to develop to form a virile state.

Between 1900 and 1914, the Northern provinces and the Southern Provinces of Nigeria were run as loose federations or confederations laying the foundation for the uneven development between the two provinces. This in turn became a breeding platform for the emergence of two societies with deep seated contradictions – feudal looking North and capitalist looking South. This built-in disparity remains the basis that bedeviled politics of the first post-colonial Nigeria and even now still reflects in the status quo in the army, the civil service and the comparative backwardness in education of the two provinces. 1946 Richards Constitution wrongly perceived and divided Nigeria into three regions of North, West and East to signal the commencement of faulty federalism in Nigeria¹⁷.

The ethnic minorities in each region managed to cope within their confined regions. Richard Constitution gave way to Macpherson Constitution of 1951 that was introduced as a response of the nationalists' criticisms of the Richard Constitution¹⁸. The 1951 constitution was drafted after series of consultations with the people from the village meetings to the national levels.

¹⁶Olateju, O (2012) Democratisation in the absence of states: Lessons from Africa APCJ Vol 2.No.5 pp..

¹⁷Oyovbaire, S E (1983) "Structural change and political processes in Nigeria". African Affairs, Vol. 82, No. 326, pp. 3–28.

¹⁸Op cit 1 p.4

This constitution which made Lagos a federal colony, also gave the regions semi-autonomous powers and paved the way for the transfer of power from British to Nigerians in 1960. One clear message that reverberated in every consultation with the people was the desire of these communities to have self-government that would not be subjected to internal colonialism. The federal legacy entrenched in 1951 MacPherson constitution was sustained by the 1954 Lyttleton constitution.

The growth in consciousness among the different nationalities in Nigeria gave rise to demands for regions which were essentially based on the major ethnic groupings. The 1946 constitution was a reflection of this growing consciousness of the nationalities and tribes in Nigeria. One significant feature of the constitution was that it provided a measure of stability for the nationalities, particularly the largest ones by creating autonomous Regions which provided the administrative and economic cohesion for the tribes and nationalities, all of which developed to become nations and with corresponding emergence of political “juggernauts” championing the cause of each region. Thus under the Macpherson Constitution, regional autonomy was more entrenched in response to the wishes of the three major ethnic groupings.

The three federating regions had considerable powers under the 1963 constitution especially in the areas of concurrent arrangement, but the retention of the concentration of the federal constituencies in the Northern region as designed by the MacPherson constitution of 1951 under the guise of size made the federal arrangement untenable. The North was allocated seats that doubled the combined seats allocated to East and West. This development therefore encouraged the suspicion that the federal arrangement was designed to favour the North because of the region’s cooperative attitude toward the colonial administrations.

This was coupled with the fact that the three regions were closely associated with the three main rival ethnic groups – Hausa-Fulani in the North, Yoruba in the West, and Igbo in the East leaving out other ethnic groups like the Kanuri, Ijaw, Uhrobo etc. The central government became a theatre of inter-ethnic struggle, while the numerous minority ethnic groups within the regions were marginalised. The federal arrangement bequeathed to Nigeria as a decolonization strategy that was assumed to concretise the foundation for a post colonial state invariably became part of her problems compounded by the disarticulation of her economy.

Capitalism and the growth of nationalism in Nigeria

The era of colonialism between 1900 and 1946, witnessed the imposition of the capitalist ideology of the ruling colonialists on the socio-economic formations in Nigeria. The influence of finance capital over the feudal, semi-slave, semi-primitive societies grew by leap and bound. By the late thirties, and early forties, Nigeria had budding capitalists, professional groups and intellectuals who were wedded to the capitalist ideology and the bourgeoisie conception of democracy. With the subtle growth of capitalism and the growing adherence to capitalist ideology, nationalism or what we may refer to as tribalism or accentuated clannism became a prominent feature in public life.

Tribal organisations grew in numerical strength and influence. The feudal boundaries and clan boundaries were socially dissolved yielding place to free enterprises and the migration of peasants, school leavers to large cities in search for work. It is therefore clear that with the development of capitalist economic, disunity of the tribes and nationalities which was prevalent in the feudal society was gradually eliminated and a single market emerged as a result of which nationalities and tribes consequently grew into nations as part of their social development transformation.

This rising tide, according to Tunji Otegbeye¹⁹, led to the formation of various nationalities' associations such as the Ibo State Union, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, the Ibiobio State Union, Jami'yar-Mutame-Arewa etc. Although these associations played prominent roles in the struggle for independence as they all forged a common front against colonialism, but they also have negative impact on the national politics.

The rivalries between the different regions and nationalities became intensified and the social malaise that we now refer to as tribalism develops. The struggle for one nationality to dominate the other became an agenda for every ethnic grouping.

Side by side with the development of acute rivalries among the three large ethnic groupings, grew the Movements for the Self-Determination of the neglected minority ethnic groups who were daily oppressed by measures taken by the domineering ethnic groups. The Tiv united the minority elements in the Middle-belt of the Northern Region to form the United Middle Belt Congress to demand for Middle-Belt State, the Kanuri and Shua Arab of Bornu Province launched the Bornu Youth Movement for Bornu State and the Ilorin and Kabba divisions launched Talaka Parapo Movement demanding a merger with their kith and kin in Western Nigeria.

In the West, the struggle of the minority ethnic groups took the shape of the Mid-West State Movement which culminated in the formation of the fourth Region, the Mid-West Region. In the East, the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State Movement and the Niger Delta Congress grew as a challenge to national oppression by the dominant Igbo ethnic group. In the latter part of the colonial era and early part of post-colonial Nigeria, two forms of antagonistic nationalism had emerged. The nationalism of the three dominant groups involving the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, not only to dominate the minorities in their regions but also to dominate the politics of the federation.

The second was the nationalism of the oppressed ethnic minority nations like the Tiv, Kanuri, Benin, Urhobo, Ijaw, Efik, Ogoja nationalities etc; who were struggling for national liberation and equality of opportunity within their respective regions. National question arises from the spirit of nationalism through which these ethnic groups demand for equal economic, social and political opportunities and active promotion of the welfare of their people. Federalism therefore fails to address this aspiration and till today Nigerian ethnic groups still perceive the federal arrangement as an obstacle to their self-determination. The reason for this perception is clear.

It is basically the request for the right of rights. The right of every nation to self-determination implies exclusively the right to political autonomy i.e. the right that constitutes a consistent expression of struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation. Each ethnic group perceives the post-colonial Nigeria as an artificial entity created by the British colonial policy. Most of them had at various times expressed doubts about its workability and therefore opine that the Nigerian state is dispensable. It is from this perspective of national question that the recent insurgence perpetuated by the Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda' Awati Wal.Jihad otherwise called Boko Haram (Western Education is sinful in Hausa language) needs to be located and critically examined.

An independent panel of experts on sub-Sahara Africa convened by the U.S Intelligence Council in March 2005 predicted the outright collapse of the Nigerian state within the next fifteen years. This conclusion was based on poor economic performance of the state combined with what being referred to in this paper as illiberal federalism that fails to give the minority ethnic groups an equal opportunities in the political and economic affairs of the nation.

¹⁹ Tunji Otegbeye, (1972) Ideological Struggles in Nigeria, A case for Socialism: A Reflections behind the Bars (unpublished)

The recent US emphasis on poverty as the driving force of the Boko-Haram insurgency appears to be a shortsighted view because the same US initially recognises faltering federalism as a major factor in Nigeria's political instability. Though Nigerian government labeled the authors of the US Intelligence Council Report as 'prophets of doom' but the atmosphere of insecurity currently pervading Nigeria seems to justify this prediction. The nature and character of the insurgency show that its primary cause is not directed at its targets because of religion, status, tribe and or political inclination.

Both Muslims and Christians have had substantial distribution of victims that deprives the insurgency of any religious tag. Its mode of attacks which resembles Palestinians mode of struggle against the Israelis, includes suicide-bombing and quasi-military tactics further distanced the its exact cause from religion but closer to restiveness due to high rate of unemployment, poverty, hopelessness and arrogant display of power and wealth by the elite. It is the same mode of resistance that is being adopted in Iraq against the Coalition army by the Taliban.

The emphasis here is that the insurgency is a form of indigenous resistance to hardships of poverty combined with the frustration of decades of exclusion from the loop of development and governance. Nigerian government initially plays the issue down by pointing at the porosity of the country's borders which allows easy linkages between some fanatical Muslims in the Northern part of Nigeria and other extremist organisations in other places. Two prominent groups that feature in the government's allegations are the Al-Qaeda group and the run-away Ghaddafists from Libya.

This is just an attempt at taking the issue away from the poor economic performance and semi-federalism domains and put it in the realm of religion in other to attract the sympathy and support of non-Muslim groups and nations. This puerile argument only provides another spectacle to view the insurgency. This is the possibility of political elite using violence as blackmail in the run-up to 2015 presidential election. This view corroborates series of allegations of complicity among high-ranking security personnel and Government officials. Recent arrests of two former Local Government Council Chairmen and a serving Special Adviser to the Governor in Kogi state over the multiple killings of worshipers in the state serve as pointer to this direction.

Also Federal Government recently charged to court one Kabiru Sokoto a terror suspect that was re-arrested after he escaped from the security personnel while escorting him to his hide out in the Federal Capital Territory. Federal Government investigation panel claimed to have met with Kabiru in his prison detention only for Kabiru to controvert this claim few days later. The manner the suspect actually escaped and the drama that followed his re-arrest is giving observers of the insurgency some concerns about the sincerity of the state in tackling the insurgency.

In October 1 2010, during the Independence Day Celebration, bombs were detonated at Eagle Square in Abuja, killing several people and destroying properties. Curiously, the security agencies that were later revealed to have had a pre-knowledge of the plan by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) chose not to put in place pre-emptive measures that will nib the plan. The federal government turns around to rely on the trial and imprisonment of the MEND leader in South Africa as part of justifications for its war against terrorism in Nigeria. This came after the President had personally exonerated MEND from the bombing incidence. More curiously, the circumstances surrounding the murder of the leader of the Boko Haram while in the custody of the state, still leave much room for suspicion on the complicity of the state in the whole saga of Boko Haram insurgency.

Whichever position one adopts, either ‘internalist’ as in the case of the US or ‘externalist’ as in the case of the Nigerian government, Boko Haram insurgency that poses serious challenges to the Nigerian state and the existing ways of governing at various levels appears not to be yielding to the Joint Task Force security approach by the state. This is a confirmation that the menace cannot be tackled primarily in terms of military security. This kind of orientation is confined to the realist school of the Cold War days. The need to examine the internalist and externalist views; national question and the conspiratorial factor in explaining the impacts of insurgencies on the individual livelihoods and the fate of federating state in Nigeria’s illiberal federalism deserves a consideration in the discourse of insurgencies in Nigeria.

Conclusion

There is a ready-made patterned response by Nigerian governments to characterise the reactions of the people to marginalisation and harsh effects of poverty, sustained by spectator democracy superintended by cartel groups masquerading as political parties, as no more than problem of law and order. Government keeps ignoring the fundamental issues involved in the insurgencies by putting palliative policy measures that will only treat the effects and not the cause in place. For example the insurgency from the Niger Delta militia was initially dismissed by the federal as mere thuggery that could be contained by security forces, putting a number of their leaders on trial for treason only for the government to later extend a paternalistic Amnesty olive branch to the militants to drag them into the loop of obedience. In Plateau state, government applied executive fiat of decrees to restrict movements of the people.

These escapist reactions are just to divert attention from the questionable federal system and the deep effects of poverty as responsible for the volatile situation in the country. The issue of national question in Nigeria refers to the strategy of re-structuring the Nigerian political structure in other to acknowledge and guarantee the identity and nationality rights of the various ethnic groups with their values within the context of a true democratic setting²⁰. It is the failure to appreciate these two fundamental factors, that is self-determination and collective values that is generating the insecurity felt by the ethnic groups especially the minority groups that keep agitating for self-identity.

The post-colonial leaders attempted to address these agitations by an imaginative policy of federal character but implemented as “tribal policy”²¹. The leaders see themselves like their colonial predecessors as trustees of the ethnic groups holding in trust the right to self determination for the various groups. They took upon themselves “to produce order in the very literal sense of monopolising violence”²² and “to preside over the formation of the basic institutions necessary for a stable, democratic state”²³ by allotting more powers to the federal government through various constitutional processes always aimed at producing a Nigerian man. The new nation building process could hardly be distinguished from the old process.

The only difference is that the old nation-building was an imperialist enterprise that was motivated by a mixture of self-interest and patronizing noblesse oblige, and which paid lip service to the right to self-determination²⁴.

²⁰Ihonvbere, J O (2000) ‘A Recipe for perpetual Crises: The Nigerian State and The Niger Delta Question’. In: Boiling Point, Lagos: CDHR p.81

²¹Op cit 15 p.19

²²Op cit 10 p.79

²³Op cit 10 p.81

²⁴Op cit 11

The post-colonial process was though not imperial but designed to sustain the colonial legacies, therefore fails to take the right to self-determination seriously. Ignatieff²⁵ stresses the weakness of both the old and new nation building processes by stressing that the indigenous cultural groups supposed to be the ones to decide what kinds of democracy, rule of law and stability of property can be successfully absorbed in their culture and context. This is the greatest challenge confronting Nigeria whose failure is rooted in the failures of all the constitutional processes to determine what terms of association is appropriate and also what should be the boundaries of the ethnic requests for self-determination. Recurring social disorders in Nigeria arise from this fact and to which the political leaders are yet to provide the right answer.

²⁵Ignatieff, M (2003) *Empire-lite: Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*. Toronto: Penguin Canada p.13